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ABSTRACT

An early childhood education program utilizing mothers as instructors within a bilingual-bicultural format, "La Escuelita" serves 8 to 10 families. Twelve to 15 children, ages 2-3, and their mothers, ages 20-40, are involved in the program which treats their culture and language as important factors. Each child's mother serves as a parent-teacher for 8 hours each week. Each mother develops her own written curriculum guides based on the selected curriculum objectives determined by the parent-teachers and the staff on a biweekly basis. Specific curriculum objectives are to: enhance Spanish and English skills in the audial and oral levels; enhance these skills via a Mexican American format; instill at this early age a level of "cultural pride"; develop social skills. The program is evaluated through pre- and posttests administered to the children, observations of the amount of child participation during the daily teaching exercises, an analysis of Spanish-English occurrences in the classroom, and an assessment of the mothers' individual planning based on a comparison between present and previous daily curriculum guides. The program evaluation indicates: a high participation by children during instruction periods; attainment of bilingual-bicultural curriculum objectives; increased independence in planning/implementing the curriculum; an increased confidence in the mothers to provide educational assistance to their children; use of both Spanish and English as mediums of instruction. (NQ)

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An Early Childhood Parent-Child Centered Bilingual-Bicultural Program[1]

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An Early Childhood Parent-Child Centered

Bilingual-Bicultural Program

An early childhood education program utilizing mothers as instructors within a bilingual-bicultural format is described and evaluated; the program serves ten families (10 mothers and 14 children, 2-3 years of age). Mothers serve as instructors for these children on a rotating basis and have the responsibility for developing and implementing a bilingual-bicultural curriculum. An analysis of the program indicates the following for the children: (1) high participation by children during instruction periods, (2) attainment of bilingual-bicultural curriculum objectives. Measures of parental variables indicate increased independence in planning/implementing curriculum and an increased confidence in providing educational assistance to their children. In addition, an evaluation of the bilingual nature of the program indicates use of both Spanish and English as mediums of instruction.

An Early Childhood Parent-Child Centered

Bilingual-Bicultural Program

Introduction

Recent research has suggested that both social and language repertoires have their origins during early childhood. It seems that almost all the basic skills (phonemes, morphemes and syntax) of adult language are acquired during these years. Consequently, it would seem advantageous to remove problems or barriers related to the development of language(s) at this early age. The language repertoires of Chicano children might be viewed as functionally different from Anglo children on at least the dimension of multilanguage acquisition. Nedlar (1971) suggests that by not being aware and/or incorporating these differences, the educational system perpetuates a pattern of failure in these children.

Therefore, it would seem reasonable to specifically target these childrens' early educational environment. The use of such an educational format would seem to provide the ideal solution. However, this format has traditionally suggested the elimination of "difference"; to the Chicano parent, this means the destruction of an important cultural identity. As one looks at the environmental demands placed on a Chicano, the complexity of this issue becomes apparent; he must not only succeed in the Anglo society but be able to be successful in his own society. The obvious answer lies in establishing a point of equilibrium between the two demands.

Recently a number of preschool bilingual-bicultural programs have been developed and are now in operation. The basic reason for the development of these preschool programs has been the promise of developing a repertoire

of the two languages before a child moves into the first grade. This may enable the child to function successfully in his home environment without lagging behind his school peers while trying to master English. An example of these preschool programs is the Greeley Center, Greeley, Colorado, designated for children under five years of age, and is for children of migrant farm workers. Its main purpose is to develop a firm foundation in both English and Spanish for the children before they start the first grade (Murphy, 1972).

Through these types of programs both educators and parents seem to be saying that Chicanos should preserve their language and culture without a threat of educational failure (Rodriguez, 1970). Examining the actions of innovative educational programs for Chicano children, a recent report on program evaluation of daycare centers in the Southwestern United States (Interstate Research Associates: Mexican American System, 1972) published the following findings and recommendations:

Findings:

(1) Lack of authentic materials developed by members of each ethnic community.

(2) Monies to date have been allocated to univesrities and institutions who in turn obtain their information from the location communities.

(3) Non-sharing of materials and studies already produced by organizations who have received government funding. They have been possessive with the above.

(4) Limited or no parent involvement. Parent involvement is identified by material work contributions.

(5) Programs are constantly being evaluated, reviewed and monitored by unqualified people who are neither bilingual nor bicultural. Our main objection is that this takes away valuable time from the teacher, administrators and ultimately robs the child of quality services. In addition, findings of these evaluations are not available to the program.

Reccomendations:

(1) The establishing of material resource centers.

(2) Monies should be allocated to local community based organizations so that needed studies may be carried out by qualified knowledgeable personnel.

(3) Parent involvement be on national, regional and local levels in all phases of the programs--also including but not limited evaluation.

(4) Strict evaluation controls must be established to regional and local levels with the following stipulations:

(a) Evaluations must be conducted by bilingual and bicultural personnel.

(b) Reports of findings must be made available to regional and local programs, agencies and interested persons.

Following from the above general concerns expressed about parent involvement, cultural identity, and early childhood education, the primary objectives of a preschool for Chicanos must be to provide a fundamental education program. This program needs to be directed towards establishing a functional knowledge of Spanish and English within a bicultural context. The following provided prerequisites for program implementation:

(1) Assessment of the childrens' Spanish and English knowledge.

(2) "Functional Knowledge": defined to mean isolation of words, phrases, etc., which could be useful to the children; that is, they would receive continuous reinforcement for their use.

(3) The cultural context of language instruction must be specific to the community.

(4) Parents of each child should be utilized as teachers for their own and other's children. This, combined with professional assistance, would enhance educational efforts. Consequently parents will be involved in the educational system. More important, their input would be a valuable addition to their own child's acquisition of linguistic, social and cultural repertoires.

(5) Evaluation should be a very important component of the program. This aspect should not be neglected or performed in a haphazard fashion (Carter, 1970). An ongoing evaluation supported by a pre and post testing would be important, especially if the results indicated failure in a specific area. Thus, immediate attention would be directed and changes implemented to correct the program. However, if the benefits (or weaknesses) of the program are to materialize, an even more detailed evaluation is of utmost importance.

The preceding has been directed towards developing a perspective of the problems facing bilingual-bicultural programs for Chicanitos. An example of a bilingual-bicultural preschool program will be presented. The program should demonstrate not only an implementation but a thorough evaluation of a specifically targeted early childhood education program.

Program Description

In the westside of Salt Lake City, Utah, Chicano children of preschool age are participating in a bilingual-bicultural education program. The basic philosophy of "La Escuelita" is that the language and culture of La Raza are legitimate educational pursuits and that involvement of parents in these pursuits is an accompanying goal. Prior to the existence of "La Escuelita", a survey of the Salt Lake City early childhood education centers was taken to identify bilingual-bicultural attributes of the existing facilities. Although 10-15% of the urban Salt Lake City population is Spanish surnamed, no bilingual-bicultural programs were identified in the early childhood education area.

"La Escuelita" served eight to ten families. Twelve to fifteen children (ages 2-3) as well as their parents (age ranged from 20-40) were involved in a preschool program which treats their culture and language as important factors. The facility was operated from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; this specific time was broken into sub-curriculum areas (i.e., educationa--Spanish and English instruction, cultural instruction, numbers, colors, storytime, free play and snack time periods). Friday was designated as a staff meeting day, at which time the curriculum specialist took charge of the children (usually on that day, children were scheduled for field trips).

Parental Involvement

The mothers of the attending children served as the primary teachers at the pre-school. The mother of each child was hired as a parent-teacher for a total of 8 hours per week. A two week training workshop was held for

mothers prior to the opening of the facility. On each Friday, all the mothers participated in a staff meeting. The purpose of such a meeting was: direct input by mothers into particular curriculum objectives selected for instruction, discussion of problems in teaching, selection of materials needed to reach curriculum objectives, specific preparation for the next week's curriculum objective(s), and discussion concerning their own or other children attending "La Escuelita". At these meetings the mothers actively discussed subjects to be taught and designated the priorities for their children.

Each mother developed her own written curriculum guides based on the selected curriculum objectives. Consequently, an assessment of individual planning by mothers could be obtained by observations on a comparison between present and previous daily curriculum guides.

Staff

Besides the parent-teachers, one graduate student was hired as director and one undergraduate as curriculum specialist. The graduate student was a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Psychology while the undergraduate was in education. Both are Chicanos. Still other Chicano undergraduate students participate on a voluntary basis (a total of six others throughout the year). Other early childhood education specialists served on a consultant basis in order to augment education training and rationale for the mothers.

Specific duties of the director were to administer the program (i.e., organize and maintain the facility and complete all the necessary paper work) and to act as a guide to the aprent-teachers in developing and implementing curriculum objectives. The duties of the curriculum specialist

included developing and searching for curriculum materials (especially literature) as well as serving as a direct aide to the parent-teachers.

Materials

Curriculum materials of a bilingual-bicultural context were difficult to obtain. Many of the materials were developed by the staff and the parents. These materials reflected the mothers' interests as well as that of the professional staff. In addition, curriculum materials were obtained from regional distribution centers as well as other individual programs throughout the west and southwest.

Curriculum

Specific curriculum objectives were determined by the parent-teachers and the staff on a biweekly basis. These decisions were made during the Friday staff meeting when all the mothers were present.

Specific curriculum objectives were:

1. To enhance Spanish and English skills in audial and oral levels of children;
2. To enhance these skills via a Mexican-American format; to instill at this early age, a level of "cultural pride";
3. To develop social skills (i.e., cooperative play, sharing, etc.).

Daily, parent-teacher, curriculum guides which designated activity, vocabulary, materials and goals were developed by each parent. Curriculum guides included the specific daily language and cultural curriculum objectives as well as the procedures and materials which were used to reach the desired objectives.

Program Analysis

Pre-Post Tests

When curriculum items and objectives were identified, a pretest of these curriculum objectives was conducted with each child. This pretest would indicate which curriculum skills the child already possessed. After the implementation of the curriculum for two weeks, a post-test similar to the pretest was administered to each child. These tests consisted of taking the child aside and asking questions (in English and Spanish) which pertained to the curriculum objectives. On two occasions, post-test results indicated no improvement in the curriculum items. For this reason, the curriculum was continued for two weeks when improvement was seen in the post-testing results. Table I summarizes pre-post test differences for the children across the separate curriculums instituted throughout the year. Note, that in all cases, an overall increase resulted from pretest to post-test. In two cases the curriculum was extended until an increase was indicated. Mean increases across all children ranged from 10-36% in Spanish.

These results indicate success in "educating" these children by mothers acting as teachers. This success occurred in both the English and Spanish curriculum areas.

TABLE 1

Mean percent difference of pre and post test scores for all children during each curriculum period

Curriculum Periods	Mean % Differences Between Pre and Post Test Scores	
	English	Spanish
1	+20	+10
2	+50	+17
3	+20	+3
3	+10	+8
3	+16	+12
4	+32	+21
5	+18	+5
5	+15	+21
6	+31	+26

Participation

A further measure of the children's and mother's success in the program was reflected by the amount of child participation during the daily teaching exercises. This measure was taken by student volunteers who observed activities daily at the daycare. These observers were present during the last 7 months of the program.

Definition of Behavior

Participation. Participation was defined as the emission of the required performances by the subject so as to conform or comply with the

stated instruction(s). The instruction(s) given by the teacher(s), may be amended at any time during the observation period to indicate a desired mode behavior. Therefore, participatien is in reference to the last instruction(s) given.

Non Participation. Any performance(s) which is disruptive to the class activity or impedes with the objective of the period as not so specified by the instruction. This includes the complete lack of conformity or compliance to the instruction or any subsequent amendment to that instruction. If disruptive behavior does not occur, then the interval is scored as following instructions.

Examples: Running, standing, walking, climbing, crawling, playing with toys not assigned, crying, screaming, (all considered in reference to performance which were not requested or instructed).

Out-of-room. Any performance(s) that has been allowed via the teacher's permission to one or several children. This may include going to the bathroom, to select a toy, to get material for class, etc. Also this is recorded when a child is taken out of the room for testing on the curriculum objectives.

Observation Procedure

Observation is based on 10-second fixed intervals for a total period of 32 minutes daily. Observation is not recorded during the 10-second interval but at the end of the 10-seconds. If the child is participating as defined previously, he will be marked as follwing instructions. The names of the children are randomly placed on a data sheet. The first child is observed for 10-seconds and then marked as either participating or not participating. The remaining seven children are then marked in a similar manner as the first child, in consecutive order.

The childrens' participation during school curriculum sessions was as follows (% of intervals in which participation was scored):

Average mean participation	90.85%
Average mean non-participation	5.61%
Average mean out-of-room	3.54%

These average percentages suggest a positive indication that the children were participating during the presentation of curriculum by parent-teachers.

Parental Independence and Educational Confidence.

An ongoing concern of the program was the development of independence on the part of the mothers to plan and implement curriculum objectives. Initially the mothers were dependent on the director's planning skills, relying almost entirely on his proposed curriculum material and educational activities. Upon termination of the year, the mothers were providing curriculum guides of their own, based on their own ability with the exception of one mother.

This production of curriculum guides suggests support for independent development of these guides by parent-teachers based on a joint effort of parent-teachers and staff. The weekly staff meeting at which time the mothers provided input into the curriculum and on the total operation of the program were an important step in preparing the mothers for independent writing of guides.

An additional measure of parent confidence in working with their children was administered in a pre-post fashion. Mothers answered these questions before beginning to teach at the start and again at the end of the program (or when they withdrew). Questions in the questionnaire can be divided into three categories:

(1) Confidence in serving as a teacher for her own children.

(2) Worth of Spanish as a legitimate language to be taught.

(3) Cultural pride.

Results of these pre-post questionnaire indicated initially a high regard for Spanish as a language and a strong pride in the Mexican-American culture, (all mothers responded positively to these questions). A change from pretesting to post-testing was seen in the answering of questions related to confidence in teaching children. Only two mothers initially responded positively to questions related to educational assistance they could provide their children, seven of the mothers responded positively on the post-test.

Bilingual Usage

Another evaluative component considered an analysis of Spanish-English occurrences in this bilingual-bicultural setting. The evaluation assesses the percentage of Spanish and English used during instructional periods by the parent-teachers.

From a questionnaire answered during the first week of the program, nine of the ten mothers reported to be bilingual (i.e., they spoke and understood both Spanish and English). The parents identified themselves as being able to speak and understand English and understand Spanish but not speak Spanish fluently.

During language observation sessions, the children were divided into groups. Each group vaired in number (from 3-5) depending on how many mothers were present that day. The classes were held in a 12' by 24' room which was divided by an observation booth. In the middle of one side of the booth was

a 3' by 2' one-way mirror. It was through this mirror that the experimenter and the reliability observers made observations. The room had two large tables, some chairs and a moveable blackboard.

The two behaviors examined were the language components used as instructional mediums:

(a) Spanish was defined as a statement incorporating one (or more) Spanish word(s). (i.e., nino)

(b) English was defined as a statement incorporating one (or more) English words.[1]

The data sheet was a series of 180 squares (representing 30 minutes, 10-seconds per interval). Codes used were "E" for English and "S" for Spanish. If only one language was used as a medium of instruction within a 10-second interval only that language code was marked in that interval; if both languages were used in the interval both codes were marked in the interval (i.e., if the parent-teacher said, "Ven aca Pressie, Sit down", within a 10-second interval both E and S were recorded).

Observations were taken for 24 days during the last 3 months of the program. Each observation consisted of a continuous 30 minute time period. This period was the time when the curriculum objectives were presented by the teacher. Throughout the study, the experimenter always told the mother that she would be observed on how much English vs. Spanish she used in teaching.

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[1]The two or more words had to be said consecutively so that a gap of more than two seconds did not occur between each word. The word, "No", was defined as English ("No" means the same thing in both languages). Because some of the children had names that were considered as both Spanish and English (i.e., "Pressie") names of people were excluded from being a word.

Interobserver reliability was taken once a week. Two observers, both psychology students with experience in behavior assessment techniques, served as independent observers during reliability sessions. Mean session reliability was .99 and was computed as the number of agreements divided by the number of agreements plus the number of disagreements for each session.

Table II

The range and the mean of each language for each mother

Parent	Range for the English	Range for the Spanish	Mean of English use	Mean of Spanish use
1	51-69%	31-49%	62%	38%
2	59-74%	26-41%	66%	34%
3	33-49%	51-67%	40%	60%
4	60-91%	1-40%	75%	25%
5	63-88%	12-37%	71%	29%
6	66-75%	25-34%	70%	30%
7	27-60%	40-73%	50%	50%
8	40-86%	14-60%	53%	47%
9	58-76%	23-41%	53%	47%
*10	32-81%	19-68%	57%	43%

*monolingual mother

A relative rate of English/Spanish responding was calculated for each session. This rate was obtained for English responding by dividing the total

English and Spanish response for any one session into the total English responses for that same session and multiplying by 100. A similar formula was used to calculate the relative occurrence of Spanish in any one session. Results of these computations are presented in Table II.

The overall range for the mothers as a group in each language were: Spanish ranged from 1-68%, English ranged from 28-99%. The overall range of mean occurrences for each language were: Spanish ranged from 25-60%, English ranged from 40-75%. Although Spanish usage was generally lower, these data do indicate that usage of both languages as a medium of instruction.

Summary and Discussion

The presentation of this bilingual-bicultural program ("La Escuelita") suggests an educational model which may serve to overcome problems Chicano children encounter. The use of parents as teachers in the actual instruction of their children establishes a method or approach to bridge the language and cultural differences of Chicano children.

The use of bilingual-bicultural parent-teachers seems to demonstrate the positive implementation of this type of instruction. Results suggest that academic and cultural topics presented bilingually by a parent-teacher holds the interest of the children, (i.e., the children participate) and, the material is learned (pre-post test measures).

Also of importance are the reported effects on parental variables. The mothers' independence in curriculum guide development improved as did a general confidence in providing education assistance for their own children.

The bilingual nature of the program was evaluated by observing the use of Spanish and English as mediums of instruction. Although these data seem to indicate a lower use of Spanish, both languages were used by the parent-teachers.

Further research efforts initiated to improve the educational success of Chicanos in the public system in conjunction with early childhood education would seem warranted. It is only through these type of programs that functional variables can be isolated for wide spread use in our educational system.

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